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I would like to thank the members of the State Board of Education for the opportunity to speak today. It is with great urgency that I share my concern over what appears to be good intentions gone wrong in the Department's proposed regulations for Random Drug Testing in schools. In my view these regulations are an unnecessary measure. I share the concerns of representatives from Hunterdon Central High School, Pequannock High School and many other districts regarding the proposed changes to the Random Drug Testing code, N.J.A.C. 6A: 16-4.4.

I believe that the proposed changes will significantly impede the implementation of a powerful tool, perhaps the most powerful tool to be studied thus far, to deter drug use among high school students. The Bernards Township Board of Education has offered a comprehensive, broad-based student assistance program since 1987. Data consistently obtained over the past 20 years has shown a minimal impact on actual high school alcohol and drug use. In the Fall of 2006, our Board of Education initiated an exploratory committee to investigate Random Drug Testing as a deterrent-based program for middle and high school students. This yearlong process allowed the committee to weigh the pros and cons of such a strong program adopted by other districts that were committed to deter the use of mind-altering substances by students. The committee favored adopting Random Drug Testing by overwhelming majority. Random Drug Testing works. It deters use by giving students a good reason to say "no". Students make healthy choices because their teams are depending on them, because their extra-curricular activities are so important to them.

Our committee believes that Random Drug Testing would have a significant deterrent effect when administered fairly and effectively. After our committee presented its findings to the Bernards Township Board of Education at a public meeting, they asked us to draft Random Drug Testing policy and procedures this past summer. However, we were forced to suspend moving forward with Random Drug Testing in our district, pending the outcome of proposed code changes.

The newly proposed code changes are prohibitive for several reasons:

- The cost of hiring a certified lab technician to perform specimen collection, instead of fully certified school nurses, would make on-site testing very expensive.



- If the district chooses to bus students to an off-campus certified lab to collect specimens and test them, confidentiality would be compromised and the student would miss a substantial amount of class time.
- Obtaining a State license to have the nurse's office become a certified sample collection site would be cumbersome and very costly. It would seem that School Nurses, who hold nursing licenses, school nurse certificates, and Master's Degrees, could be easily trained to follow on-site collection procedures and testing protocol.

All schools recognize that on-site screening is only a preliminary step in the process. At worst, a specimen can be determined to be inconclusive. Only with strict chain of custody procedures, verification by a state certified laboratory and a medical review officer are specimens considered positive. The process is taken very seriously and handled according to strict standards.

Most importantly, I am very concerned that you are missing the forest for the trees. All of this focus on paying large amounts of money for official lab results is a red herring. The really meaningful purpose of Random Drug Testing is to give our kids another 'out', a plausible excuse for not going along with the crowd. We want to give that security net to our kids.

If the State Board of Education finalizes the proposed code changes, Bernards Township and many other school districts considering Random Drug Testing will need to resort to other, less effective ways to impact the disturbingly high use of alcohol and drugs by our students.